

Ashtabula County Medical Center

 Cleveland Clinic affiliate

May 02, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

We at Ashtabula County Medical Center are pleased to participate and support the OneCommunity Rural Health Care project. This initiative, designed to serve Northeast Ohio Region, has been created in response to the FCC announcement for a Rural Health Care Pilot Program.

Opened in 1904, Ashtabula County Medical Center is a full-service, 249-bed medical center that serves Ashtabula County and surrounding communities as their primary healthcare provider. ACMC is a community owned; non-profit hospital located about 60 miles east of Cleveland, 40 miles west of Erie, Pennsylvania, and 50 miles north of Warren, Ohio. ACMC serves a primarily rural and underserved population of approximately 103,000 residents in the geographically largest county in Ohio with a land area of 703 square miles.

ACMC is the only provider of maternity services in this county. Other services include inpatient and outpatient surgery, pediatrics unit, occupational medicine, skilled nursing, cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, pain management, orthopedics, sleep disorders, and physical and occupational therapy. ACMC is an affiliate of the Cleveland Clinic Health System and has access to their world class medical services. Subsidiaries of ACMC are Ashtabula Regional Home Health Services and Glenbeigh, a substance abuse treatment center.

Using statistics from the 2000 census, 9.2% of Ashtabula County family households live below the poverty line. The median household income was \$35,607.00 for a household of 2.56 making it very difficult for many county residents to afford what technology has to offer because it is frequently viewed as a luxury. Combined with our low population density Ashtabula County's economy provides a challenge to all of the county's public services.

ACMC, realizing the positive impact this Rural Healthcare Pilot Program would have for our patient care within our rural and economically challenged community, has requested OneCommunity put the regional gateway for Ashtabula County within ACMC's computer facility. ACMC is one of the largest organizations that provides service to the entire county and surrounding communities making it a good fit for the regional gateway.

ACMC recognizes the need to develop and provide a regional/rural network infrastructure that provides critical healthcare services to our physician and patient population at a reasonable cost using innovative methods that better meet their need. **An** internet connected system would allow ACMC to improve it's delivery of high **quality care in an efficient and economical way**

ACMC owns a Home Health provider and is implementing many new home health systems. One that will benefit our patient population is a home health monitoring system called Vital Tel. The system uses "turtle" workstations that the home patient can hook up to transmit their vitals. The goal is to improve those devices with cameras once high speed data lines are available to patients. The preferred method of communications back to ACMC with this application would be through the internet. The rural initiative would provide access back to ACMC and other hospitals within Northeast Ohio so that the healthcare expertise of specialists which normally must limit their practice to higher population density locales can be shared with the more rural populations.

Another system that ACMC has recently learned about that would provide much more responsive services to stroke victims is the REACH Stroke Program from the Medical College of Georgia. The Remote Evaluation for Acute Ischemic Stroke (REACH) program's purpose is to address the need for better access to stroke specialists in smaller communities that are distant from urban centers. The initiative is intended to give urban based stroke specialists the ability to remotely examine patients, review CT scans, and make recommendations regarding tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) treatment for patients in outlying emergency departments.

Utilizing the REACH system comprised of a wireless camera, computer, speaker phone and the internet, the stroke specialists at larger urban healthcare facilities can actually look at and talk to the possible stroke patient in the rural emergency department. This remote evaluation assists staff with diagnosing **an** ischemic stroke (blood clot in the arteries of the brain, leading to brain tissue death) and if the patient is a good candidate for the clot buster, tPA. Unfortunately only ischemic strokes are treatable with the clot buster tPA; however, the stroke specialists also offer their expertise in the management of hemorrhagic strokes (bleeding in the brain).

With the implementation of the OneCommunity Rural Health Care project, **any** hospital in the network could implement the REACH Stroke **Program** and improve their response to stroke victim treatment.

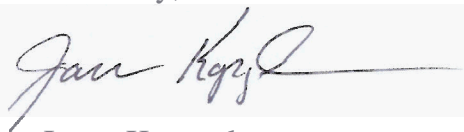
ACMC is an affiliate of Cleveland Clinic **and** currently shares many systems through a DS3 line. Since ACMC is rural, the communications presently used **are** not always stable or adequate, which effects patient care. With the OneCommunity concept we feel **we** would enhance our network needs and be able to provide a stable network for our Radiology, Lab, and referrals systems back to Cleveland Clinic.

Partnering with OneCommunity ACMC will realize a dramatic impact in providing systems and telemedicine to our outer and remote physicians and patients. The impact in

terms of patient safety with **ACMC** being able to provide faster services to our surrounding physicians would be substantially increased. Being able to provide a faster network at a reasonable cost will also allow **ACMC** to keep patient cost down.

To summarize we are in support of OneCommunity and how it will benefit our patients **and** physicians within Ashtabula County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Kopczak", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Jason Kopczak
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